

FACTSHEET FOR EMPLOYERS

PEOPLE WITH TOURETTE SYNDROME (TS), LIKE MANY OTHERS IN THE ND COMMUNITY, OFTEN BRING UNIQUE STRENGTHS TO TEAM WORKING, FROM QUICK AND INNOVATIVE THINKING TO A CREATIVE, COMPASSIONATE AND EMPATHIC VIEWPOINT.

We find that those with TS, and indeed other ND conditions, approach problems from a different angle and often come up with innovative solutions by thinking differently and challenging the norms, very often questioning why things are done in a certain way and seeking to improve processes. Proving to be an invaluable asset to any team.

The neurodivergent mind is wired differently meaning many possess an amazing imagination, which leads to incredible creativity.

Historically, we have placed too much emphasis on deficit, and things that people with certain diagnosis may struggle with. Instead, we should be working alongside our teams to identify their individual requirements, strengths, and limitations to explore how we can nurture these skills to increase wellbeing and productivity for them and the organisation.

There are no jobs closed to people with TS. People with the condition work as chefs, bricklayers, drivers, computer specialists, medical professionals, teachers, barbers, police officers and almost any profession you can think of. In fact, with over 300,000 people in the UK living with TS you may already have an employee with TS without even knowing it.

Sadly, stigma that surrounds TS continues to perpetuate challenges for employees with the condition. We need to

be exploring how we can recruit and retain neurodiverse employees, including those with TS. Many in the TS community will be an invaluable asset to the team, not *in spite* of their condition but *because* of it. Drawing upon lived experiences, the adaptability and empathy which often stems from growing up with a ND condition in a world designed for neurotypical people, can prepare them to bring unique or critical perspectives to teams.

TOURETTE SYNDROME AND DISABILITY

Legal definition of disability: *A person has a disability if they have a mental or physical impairment which has a long term substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.*

TS is a disability and therefore people are protected under the Equality Act 2010 from being discriminated against because of their condition. All the usual rules about discrimination apply to people with TS. It is advised that employers assume an employee with a neurodiverse condition meets the definition and is therefore protected against discrimination. Why?

- Promotes inclusion and diversity
- Reduces the risk of legal action
- Enhances the working experience by treating all employees fairly/making reasonable adjustments where necessary

Never assume you know how TS will affect an employee as each person is different, and TS is a complicated condition

that can have a wide range of impacts on a person's life and ability to undertake work.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Employers often mean well, adding what they perceive to be reasonable adjustments for an employee. However, they need to work *with* employees to get the best from them. No assumptions on best practices should be made – it should be a joint decision between employee and employer, finding what works best for the employee. People with TS often know their strengths and limitations, from a lifetime of navigating life, education, relationships, and employment with TS. Employers need to make the environments work for all employees.

The primary workplace adjustment to help people with TS thrive is adapting the social environment. This entails upskilling and educating staff on the characteristics and features of the condition to create an inclusive and safe workspace in which people feel comfortable to tic without fear of consequence, judgement, or misunderstanding.

This can be done in many ways and will look different for each employee. Sometimes an email to the team informing that someone will be joining with TS and including information about TS will be enough. Or you may wish to get Tourettes Action to run a team training session to really explore the condition, ask specific adjustment questions and see how to create TS inclusion from recruitment to retirement.

Alternatively, you could ask staff who may be supervising or line managing an employee, to complete Tourettes Action's FREE Online Introduction to TS Course. Remember, everyone is different, and it is important to work alongside employees with TS from recruitment to assess and implement adjustments in a proactive way – don't wait and see what is needed as that could essentially set someone up to fail.

Co-create a work environment in which people feel safe to be their wonderful, authentic selves to harness the unique skills and talents of your ND workforce.

WHAT CAN TOURETTES ACTION DO TO SUPPORT YOU?

We have a **FREE eLearning course, Understanding Tourette Syndrome**, that is packed full of useful information. In this module, you will learn what TS is, co-occurring features and differences that accompany

it, how it affects an individual and what can be done to help, understand and support them. We are proud that our eLearning course is **CPD accredited** meaning it has reached the required Continuing Professional Development standards and benchmarks.

As part of **our Training Offer** we deliver bespoke sessions for professionals in health, social care, teaching, and support services; workplace training; business awareness groups and lunch and learn sessions. Each session is tailored to the individual organisations needs and the cost is £200. All our sessions are delivered by professionals that not only have the desired professional skills but also have lived experience of the condition, meaning they provide strategies that *actually* work in practice and are not *thought* to work. For more information please contact lucy@tourettes-action.org.uk.

INTERVIEWING SOMEBODY WITH TS

A person is not obliged to say on their application form that they have TS, but if they do, you need to make sure that they can access the interview and will not be disadvantaged in any way.

- Ask about any reasonable adjustments before the interview stage that might make the process more accessible, such as interview location/online options
- Offer interview questions beforehand to reduce anxiety and create a supportive environment for people to show off their skills. However, it is important to note that identifying and implementing reasonable adjustments may be a work in progress, as it's unlikely that an employee will be able to predict all barriers to engagement and wellbeing they may face before they are in post.
- Provide regular opportunities to review employee wellbeing and consider additional adjustments or processes which could support wellbeing or function.
- Understand that expecting a ticcer to suppress in an interview is likely to impact their performance
- Remember, interviews are anxiety-provoking scenarios, and the tics present during this may not be representative of a 'typical' day

REASONABLE WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS

People with TS are usually aware of what makes their situation work. Don't be afraid to talk to your employee about what they think their needs might be.

Be aware that if you are making changes to a workspace or working hours, for example, this may affect a person with TS. Involve them in the planning process to mitigate the effects of the changes on their TS.

Remember that all people with TS will be different, so it is important to work with the employee to find what will work for them. These are, however, some simple things that may help employees with TS in the workplace.

Adapt the task/processes:

- Allow flexible working – Consider pain, injury and fatigue caused by tics and the changeable nature of TS
- Put in place strategies to support organisation, memory, and well-being, such as workplace coaching
- Adopt a person-centred strength and needs based approach

Adapt the social environment:

- A socially accepting work culture is one of the most protective factors to someone with TS
- Create a culture of acceptance by maintaining equality and diversity
- Offer awareness training to colleagues to inform and educate on what TS is and what it is not

Adapt the physical environment:

- Where possible, offer hybrid working – this can enable people with TS to work from a space they feel comfortable which accommodates for the fluctuating nature of the condition.
- Some people with TS prefer to tic in private, so may prefer a private and safe space for tic breaks. In providing this you will reduce the anxiety of ticcing in public and prevent the rebound effects that suppression can cause
- Consider adaptive equipment such as ergonomic desk/ chair, separate keyboard, and mouse
- Some people with TS may occasionally need the use of a wheelchair or walking aids, so ensure the building is accessible
- A Sunflower lanyard can help make others more aware

Adapt the sensory environment:

- Sensory adjustments such as movement breaks can increase productivity by enabling people to get the sensory input they need to focus and function
- Consider the sensory environment when designing office spaces, bright lights, loud noises, strong smells, and the layout of a room are just some of the sensory

components which can impact a person's tics.

Designing sensory informed working spaces can benefit all employees, not only those with TS.

Some working examples might be:

University student support services employee

- Whole staff training on tics and TS joined by the employee to keep content relevant
- Email disclaimer to inform other people of their access needs and how these might present during online or face to face meetings
- Adapting tasks using executive function strategies so they could better manage their workload
- Provided a calm and safe private space for the employee to tic if they require

NHS Therapist

- Adapted case load requirements to ensure the individual had time to process, plan and record notes before and after sessions (executive function support)
- Staff member not required to conduct phone assessments due to tics
- Whole staff team contacted before the new member joined, informing them of a new employee with the condition (email formulated alongside employee)
- Use of 'I have TS' badge on staff lanyard informing people of the therapists needs

Electrician

- An electrician who visits private and business properties may carry a card or letter from their company that explains that they have TS. It might say that if they are making unusual noises or movements, it is because of their condition, and can be shown when they arrive at a property so that the customer understands

GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

There is a risk that the Tribunal will penalise an employer for not following a fair Grievance and/or disciplinary process.

Please follow [**Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures**](#) for more details.

Claims in the Employment Tribunal

An employee has three months from the date of an act of discrimination to bring a claim to the Employment Tribunal. This limitation period will roll on when there are continuing acts of discrimination.

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS AND RESOURCES

ACAS

The ACAS helpline is for anyone who needs employment law or workplace advice, including employers, employees, and workers.

www.acas.org.uk

Genius Within

Genius Within are experts in helping organisations to benefit from the specialist skills of neurodivergent thinkers.

geniuswithin.org

Citizens Advice

A national organisation and network of local charities offer confidential advice online, over the phone, and in person, for free.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Equality Advisory & Support Service (EASS)

The helpline advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights, across England, Scotland and Wales.

www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

SCOPE

Offering a helpline, online community, a range of employment and child sleep services, community engagement programmes, partnerships and more.

www.scope.org.uk